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Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 8 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)
later: Ms. Schroderus-Fox (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Finland)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners (*continued*)

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5/Add.11, Add.24, Add.25, Add.26, Add.27, Add.28, Add.29, Add.30, Add.37, Add.38, Add.40, Add.42, Add.43, Add.45, Add.46, Add.48, Add.52, Add.53, Add.54, Add.55, Add.56, Add.57, Add.59, Add.63, Add.64, Add.65, Add.66, Add.77, Add.78, Add.81, Add.83)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Ayachi (Comité National Algérien de Solidarité avec le Peuple Sahraoui) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Ayachi** (Comité National Algérien de Solidarité avec le Peuple Sahraoui) said that, for more than three decades, the human rights of the Saharawi people had been grossly violated, generating an atmosphere of terror that had dissuaded many victims and witnesses from reporting the atrocities. Many of the violations had not been properly documented or investigated due to that atmosphere and to the media embargo and difficulties of access for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the international media and observers. Hundreds of Saharawi people had been arrested and, following unfair trials, imprisoned in detention centres where brutal methods of torture were practiced with impunity. The Moroccan occupying administration was perpetrating odious crimes against humanity, including kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial executions and enforced internal displacement and exile; men, women and children from all walks of life were victims.

3. The international aid provided to the 165,000 Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf camps was insufficient, representing less than 50 cents a day for each person. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had recently visited the Saharawi refugee camps and expressed deep concern about the lack of food, health care, and basic infrastructure and services. The Committee should call for the granting of access to the camps for international observation missions and for the expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to include the monitoring of human rights in Western Sahara.

4. *Mr. Ayachi withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Hamoudi (Deputy Mayor of Tours, France) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Ms. Hamoudi** (Deputy Mayor of Tours, France) said that in February 2009 she had been a member of a French delegation of 140 elected officials that had carried out a fact-finding mission on the humanitarian situation in the Tindouf refugee camps. The delegation had been able to speak freely to the refugees, gather information and assess the humanitarian needs. On her return to France, she had testified about her experience and received some criticism from advocates of a Moroccan Sahara but also encouragement from people of Moroccan origin who supported the Saharawi people's right to self-determination. As a result of an appeal launched by the delegation, several tons of materials and food had been sent to the camps in August 2009. It was clear, however, that the difficulties of the Saharawi people could only be resolved within the context of the United Nations. The MINURSO mandate must be expanded to allow it to monitor respect for human rights.

7. *Ms. Hamoudi withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Elghouayel (Together Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Mr. Elghouayel** (Together Foundation) said that, in June 2007, two Australian journalists and film-makers had advised the Foundation that a situation of systematic and institutionalized slavery had been practised for decades by white Saharawis over their black fellow refugees in the Frente POLISARIO camps. The journalists had made a documentary which was being shown at international film festivals. The members of the Foundation had remained sceptical and had organized meetings between the journalists and other NGOs, including Human Rights Watch; the journalists had also been invited to a meeting with the United Nations Correspondents Association. The Foundation had arranged with the Frente POLISARIO leadership to send a mission of independent international journalists to visit the camps; but the communication lines had been interrupted without explanation and the mission had been aborted.

Nevertheless, the Foundation had been able to meet representatives of the camp dwellers during two visits to Mauritania. One of the interviews had been recorded and had appeared on YouTube.

10. *Mr. Elghouayel withdrew.*

11. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

12. **Ms. Bahaijoub** (Family Protection) said that the Algerian authorities had consistently ignored the international community's call to address the issue of those who had disappeared from the Tindouf camps and to identify the bodies buried in 49 graves located near the main prison, near the Frente POLISARIO headquarters at Rabouni. Independent reports by returnees to Morocco referred to gross human rights violations perpetrated by the Frente POLISARIO leadership against the people in the Tindouf camps, with women, children and the elderly being targeted specifically. However, the abuses were not being addressed due to the lack of access to the camps and because all matters related to the camps passed through the Algerian authorities. While the Security Council searched for a lasting political solution, preferably based on the proposal for autonomy as the only viable solution for the disputed Territory, the people in the Tindouf camps should be allowed to return to Morocco and Algeria should improve living conditions in the camps instead of ignoring the inhumane conditions that prevailed.

13. *Ms. Bahaijoub withdrew.*

14. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Hemeida took a place at the petitioners' table.*

15. **Ms. Hemeida**, speaking in her personal capacity as a Saharawi student in the United States of America, said that the illegal Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara had taken the Saharawi people's land, threatened their identity and violated their human rights. Half the Saharawi lived in the occupied Territory, while the other half, including her family, lived in one of the largest refugee camps in the world and were dependent on humanitarian aid. Half the refugees were children, who were considered to be the generation that would bring about change for Western Sahara, but the occupation had crushed their hopes for the future. She had benefited from the generosity of an American host family and had the opportunity to pursue higher education. Her dream was that every Saharawi child could have the same chance in life. All Saharawi people aspired to the right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum.

16. *Ms. Hemeida withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Táboas Veleiro took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Ms. Táboas Veleiro**, speaking in her personal capacity as a member of the Galician Nationalist Party in the Galician Parliament, said that the international community must recognize the sovereignty of the Saharawi people, long-time inhabitants of the region that had shaped their national identity. So many initiatives had failed that the Saharawi people in the refugee camps in Algeria had begun to lose hope of recovering their Territory and having their right to self-determination recognized. The United Nations must support a self-determination process that included the option of independence and the monitoring of respect for human rights. Self-determination was the only way to ensure the Saharawi nation's survival and full control over its Territory with the ultimate goal of founding a State. The Organization must set in motion a transparent referendum with full guarantees.

19. *Ms. Táboas Veleiro withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Boussif (President, Council of the region of Rio de Oro) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Mr. Boussif** (President, Council of the region of Rio de Oro) said that there were two main reasons why all the measures taken by the international community with regard to Western Sahara had failed. First, the obstinacy of Algeria, which wanted the negotiations to fail, because it sought a corridor to the Atlantic and wanted to cut Morocco off from Western Sahara. Second, the control of the Frente POLISARIO by the Algerian security authorities, which dictated its decisions. Morocco had proposed broad autonomy for the Saharawi people to enable them to govern themselves, giving Algeria the opportunity to disengage from the complex situation with honour. Although Morocco's proposal had been accepted by many in the international community, the situation remained unchanged, owing to the obstinacy of Algeria. The Frente POLISARIO leaders must rise to their responsibilities and declare their independence from the mandates of Algeria in order to negotiate in

complete freedom. The Tindouf camp should be taken away from Algeria. Any solution to the conflict had to involve Algeria, as the principal actor, which should have the courage to end the conflict.

22. *Mr. Boussif withdrew.*

23. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Corbyn (Chair, Western Sahara Group, United Kingdom Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

24. **Mr. Corbyn** (Chair, Western Sahara Group, United Kingdom Parliament) said that the United Nations had a crucial role to play in ensuring a peaceful and just future for the people of the Western Sahara. It had endeavoured to maintain the ceasefire and ensure the survival of the people in the camps ever since Morocco occupied the Territory, forcing the majority of the Saharawi people into refugee camps in Algeria. In law, the Saharawi people had the right of return and must be allowed to decide their own future. Their poverty and hardship was in stark contrast to the considerable riches of Western Sahara that were being exploited by settlers and international companies. The European Union had concluded trade agreements and provided support to Morocco, despite protests regarding human rights abuses and the sale of Western Sahara's natural resources.

25. Action should be taken immediately, particularly to allow prison visits and the release of prisoners. The United Nations must acknowledge the illegal nature of the continued occupation and take political action to correct it and to ensure that the 165,000 people living in forced exile received the right to self-determination. A settlement that brought justice for the Saharawi people would be of immense benefit to all the peoples of the region and ensure good relations between all the nations of the Maghreb.

26. *Mr. Corbyn withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Sahli-Fadel took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Sahli-Fadel**, speaking in her personal capacity as a professor of international law, said that since Western Sahara was an occupied Territory, Morocco, as the occupying Power, must fulfil its international obligations by protecting the rights of the Saharawi people and maintaining the territorial status quo. The International Court of Justice had confirmed the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and rejected Moroccan sovereignty over the Territory. Morocco was engaged in political repression against the Saharawi people in the occupied Territory and was exploiting their natural resources, in violation of international law. While the question of Western Sahara continued to be manipulated by States which showed little concern for international law, the United Nations must give precedence to the imperative need of self-determination for the Saharawi people.

29. *Ms. Sahli-Fadel withdrew.*

30. *Ms. Schroderus-Fox (Finland), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

31. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Lewis (Western Sahara Resource Watch) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

32. **Ms. Lewis** (Western Sahara Resource Watch), speaking also on behalf of the Australia Western Sahara Association, said that the allegations of the Together Foundation, based on the report of two Australian journalists, were unfounded and the documentary contained many errors. The main character had attended the opening night of the film to deny that she was a slave and express her anger at being portrayed as such.

33. The aim of her organization was to research what was happening to the resources in the part of Western Sahara under Moroccan control and to protect them from exploitation by anyone other than the Saharawi people. The United Nations should be protecting those resources, instead of standing by while they were sold for Morocco's benefit. Phosphate mined in the Territory was being sold by a Moroccan state company without any improvement in the living conditions of the Saharawi people. A similar story could be told in the case of fish, sand, water, oil and other minerals, as well as tourism. The Australia Western Sahara Association was particularly concerned because three Australian fertilizer companies were importing phosphates from Western Sahara, even though Swedish and Norwegian entities had blacklisted two of them.

34. The Committee should reaffirm the permanent sovereignty of peoples over their natural resources and should send an observation mission to the Territory to report on the situation. MINURSO should be empowered to protect the natural resources of the Territory from exploitation by the occupying Power, Morocco.

35. *Ms. Lewis withdrew.*

36. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Blanc took a place at the petitioners' table.*

37. **Mr. Blanc**, speaking in his personal capacity as a professor emeritus, University of Perpignan Via Domitia, said that Morocco's initiative for negotiating a status of autonomy for the region of the Sahara within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom, its territorial integrity and its national unity represented a solemn commitment to make a positive contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to find a political resolution to the conflict. That type of status has been tested in the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain, and was a solution that was appropriate for strengthening the democracy of strongly centralized systems. Genuine regional autonomy, within the framework of the indivisibility of the State, would ensure to the Saharawi people, acting through their legislative, executive and judiciary bodies within the territorial limits of the region, all the powers of a State except for the attributes of the central State.

38. *Mr. Blanc withdrew.*

39. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bouaida took a place at the petitioners' table.*

40. **Ms. Bouaida**, speaking in her personal capacity as a member of the Moroccan Parliament, said that while a very critical situation existed in the Tindouf camps, and was being blatantly manipulated by Algeria, Morocco had made considerable progress, especially in the socio-economic development of the southern provinces.

41. Young Saharawis, such as herself, agreed with the autonomy proposal, because it would consolidate previous achievements and make the region an essential actor in the North African region. A negotiated autonomy would strengthen the Sahara region at all levels, ensure adequate living conditions for all Saharawis and allow the Saharawi people to concentrate on developing their culture, economy and society, while managing their local affairs. One consequence of the conflict had been the growth of smuggling in the region, including drug trafficking. A normalization of the political situation in the region was urgently needed.

42. *Ms. Bouaida withdrew.*

43. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Lebaihi took a place at the petitioners' table.*

44. **Mr. Lebaihi**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Saharawi student in the United States of America, said that he had lived most of his life in a refugee camp in the Sahara desert in south-western Algeria, where survival depended on humanitarian aid which was decreasing each year. The Saharawi people could wait no longer; they must be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum. The Committee should use its influence to help the Saharawi people exercise that right, whatever the outcome.

45. *Mr. Lebaihi withdrew.*

46. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. López Villicaña took a place at the petitioners' table.*

47. **Mr. López Villicaña**, speaking in his personal capacity as a faculty member of the University of the Americas, Puebla, Mexico, said that through its initiative for broad autonomy for the region of the Sahara, Morocco was willing to allow the Saharawi people, including those in the Tindouf camps, to exercise their right to self-determination. The proposal was in line with the principle embodied in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, furthermore, with General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), which stated that all people had the right freely to determine their political status, without external influence. Morocco's proposal had been described by the Security Council as part of serious and credible efforts to move the process forward to resolution. The international community should help the Saharawi people confined in Tindouf to return in peace and harmony to their homes in the provinces of southern Morocco.

48. *Mr. López Villicaña withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Dobovšek took a place at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Mr. Dobovšek**, speaking in his personal capacity as a professor of law, said that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Western Sahara of 16 October 1975, though not binding upon States, was binding upon the General Assembly as an organ of the United Nations. That Advisory Opinion referred to the legal ties between Morocco and the people of Western Sahara; the decolonization process must take into

account all the principles involved in respect both of the Saharawi people and of Morocco. Extreme positions involving independence or annexation had already been found unworkable and were holding up the process.

51. The autonomy proposal made by Morocco was founded in international law, General Assembly resolutions on self-determination and territorial integrity and the Advisory Opinion. It would protect the identity of the Saharawi people and allow them to administer their own affairs. He urged the Committee to promote progress in the negotiations towards a solution for Western Sahara based on that p osal.

52. *Mr. Dobovšek withdrew.*

53. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Loungou took a place at the petitioners' table.*

54. **Mr. Loungou**, speaking in his personal capacity as a university professor, Omar Bongo University, Gabon, said that the Sahel-Saharan region was ravaged by political and criminal gangs and terrorist groups. The profits generated by trafficking in weapons, drugs, and illegal migrants enabled terrorist groups to expand their operations and recruit new members among the local population. The proximity to large military facilities of the refugee camps in Algeria introduced a dangerous element in the region, and could give refugees access to large stocks of weapons; given the frustration of the occupants of the camps, who saw no chance of a settlement to the question of Western Sahara because of the intransigence of the Frente POLISARIO and the Algerian position regarding the Moroccan proposal of autonomy, they might see no alternative to joining the terrorists.

55. *Mr. Loungou withdrew.*

56. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Nakagawa took a place at the petitioners' table.*

57. **Ms. Nakagawa**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that Morocco was conducting many development projects in the Sahara region. In its pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, it was applying the same strategies throughout its territory. If the autonomy proposed by Morocco became a reality, representatives from all walks of Western Saharan life would be actively engaged in the region's human, social and economic development.

58. In contrast to the situation of the Saharawi community in the southern provinces of Morocco, the situation in the Tindouf camps was characterized by rigid military control and violations of human rights. The United Nations must safeguard the interests of the people of Western Sahara. The autonomy proposal would allow the parties concerned to reach a compromise and to conduct substantive negotiations.

59. *Ms. Nakagawa withdrew.*

60. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Carrillo Giralt (Deputy, Parliament of Catalonia, Coordinator of the Intergroup "Peace and Freedom in the Sahara") took a place at the petitioners' table.*

61. **Mr. Carrillo Giralt** (Deputy, Parliament of Catalonia, Coordinator of the Intergroup "Peace and Freedom in the Sahara") said that in November 2007, the Parliament of Catalonia had adopted a Declaration expressing solidarity with the Saharawi people, whose human rights were being violated by Morocco. The United Nations must push for a political solution for Western Sahara, with the participation of both Morocco and Spain. The wall built by Morocco must be destroyed and the millions of landmines it had deployed must be removed. All missing persons and prisoners of war must be accounted for and the illegal economic exploitation of Western Sahara must be stopped.

62. *Mr Carrillo Giralt withdrew.*

63. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Addicks took a place at the petitioners' table.*

64. **Mr. Addicks**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the German Parliament, said that he believed that autonomy was the best solution. Should all the people living in the Tindouf camp return to their homeland, they would be able to enjoy human rights, political liberty and autonomy. The Frente POLISARIO wanted all or nothing, regardless of the situation of the refugees. It must compromise and leave behind its cold war mentality. For the refugees, it would be better to accept the Moroccan proposal of autonomy and self-administration and achieve one day, in peace and liberty, full autonomy and self-determination.

65. *Mr. Addicks withdrew.*

66. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Boussola took a place at the petitioners' table.*

67. **Ms. Boussola**, speaking in her personal capacity as member of the Moroccan Parliament, said that most people in the Sahara lived peaceful, secure lives and contributed to their own development through democratic institutions and civil associations. The turnout had been high in local elections which international observers had described as free and democratic. Women were involved in politics, society and all sectors of productive activity and Morocco was combating discrimination against them.

68. The autonomy for Western Sahara proposed by Morocco would break the deadlock. The parties concerned must leave behind entrenched positions and reach a compromise to protect the interests of the Saharawi people.

69. *Ms. Boussola withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Ducarme took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Ducarme**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the Belgian Parliament, stressed the importance of a long-term view which, through compromise, would solve the long-standing problem of Western Sahara. Old ideologies must be set aside so that efforts could be focused on peace and development in the context of such initiatives as the Euro-Mediterranean Union. He expressed support for the Moroccan proposal for autonomy.

72. The rights of the children of Western Sahara were being violated by the Frente POLISARIO in the name of education. Young Saharawis from the Tindouf camps were being sent to schools in other countries and had no contact with their families for many years. The host countries must put a moratorium on education abroad for those children.

73. *Mr. Ducarme withdrew.*

74. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

75. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Al-Jabari took a place at the petitioners' table.*

76. **Mr Al-Jabari**, speaking in his personal capacity as a dean, Hebron University, said that although Morocco's plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara was ambitious, it was considered realistic by many countries.

77. He called for international verification of accounts of human rights abuses in the Tindouf refugee camps and urged an end to such violations. The refugees should return to their homeland, which Morocco would develop to every degree possible under the autonomy plan.

78. *Mr. Al-Jabari withdrew.*

79. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Nchama (Spokesperson for the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

80. **Mr. Nchama** (Spokesperson for the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea) expressed strong support for the autonomy proposal, which would distribute power while safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, while avoiding the adverse effects of secession. The population would be assured democratic management of their affairs and the opportunity to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of Morocco.

81. *Mr. Nchama withdrew.*

82. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Mekyna (Institut Austria Marocco) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

83. **Mr. Mekyna** (Institut Austria Marocco) said that the Saharawi and the Moroccans, like most of the population of the Maghreb, were historically related; if an artificial state was created, further destabilization would ensue. The socio-economic progress achieved by Morocco in Western Sahara was proof of the validity of the autonomy proposal. The time had come for forgiveness, not blame based on the history of colonialism. Algeria must open its borders towards Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO must allow the Saharawi in the camps to go back to their homeland.

84. *Mr. Mekyna withdrew.*

85. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Mghizlat (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Mr. Mghizlat** (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs) said that the conflict in the Sahara had been created by Algeria, in the context of the cold war, to undermine Morocco's territorial integrity and hinder its development. The efforts by Morocco to find a solution had led to the creation by King Mohammed VI

of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs. The people of Western Sahara supported the autonomy proposal, which was the only viable solution which would guarantee the rights of the Territory's inhabitants and ensure stability and sustainable development in the Maghreb and Mediterranean region.

87. *Mr. Mghizlat withdrew.*

88. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Olarte (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

89. **Mr. Olarte** (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) said that every effort must be made to avoid a violent solution, which would benefit no one. Algeria, through its hostility towards Morocco, had kept the dispute going. Its support for the Frente POLISARIO only served the objective of putting in place a puppet State that would provide it with an Atlantic coast, a strategic advantage and mineral wealth. The United Nations must put pressure on Algeria to reach a solution.

90. Morocco's proposal for that full autonomy would guarantee the people of Western Sahara a better and more decent life, while respecting their cultural and national identity and safeguarding their political, economic and cultural rights.

91. *Mr. Olarte withdrew.*

92. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Salazar Varela (Mayor of Tena, Ecuador) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

93. **Mr. Salazar Varela** (Mayor of Tena, Ecuador) expressed his wish for peace and harmony in Western Sahara. His city was twinned with Laayoune and his Saharan brothers and sisters there and in Algeria would be happier without the borders that divided them.

94. *Mr. Salazar Varela withdrew.*

95. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr Abderrahmane (Chamber of Artisans, Dakhla) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

96. **Mr. Abderrahmane** (Chamber of Artisans, Dakhla) said that the conflict in the Sahara threatened the peace and security of the entire region of the Sahel, which had become a haven for all kind of terrorists and traffickers. Algeria, despite the vast sums it spent on sophisticated weapons, had not been able to secure its borders against infiltration and stop the violence being waged by a handful of extremists. The violence could only be resolved with the effective contribution and participation of all countries in the region, through the elimination of the real causes and the establishment of an atmosphere of transparency and trust. Algeria must not harbour arm, finance and support Frente POLISARIO militias in their attacks on the territorial integrity of a neighbouring State. Morocco and Algeria must negotiate a political solution to the question of Sahara.

97. *Mr. Abderrahmane withdrew.*

98. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Acevedo Quevedo took a place at the petitioners' table.*

99. **Mr. Acevedo Quevedo**, speaking in his personal capacity as a senator, Paraguay, called on the parties concerned to continue their negotiations to broaden the programme of family visits; such visits would also help create an atmosphere of mutual trust. The human dimension of the conflict must be borne in mind; the parties must ensure respect for the human rights of the people of Western Sahara in the Territory and in the refugee camps.

100. *Mr. Acevedo Quevedo withdrew.*

101. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Oribe took a place at the petitioners' table.*

102. **Mr. Oribe**, speaking in his personal capacity as member of the Provincial Council of Álava, Spain, said that the exercise of fundamental human rights required, first and foremost, respect for the right to self-determination. At the same time, the perpetrators of human rights abuses against the Saharawi people must be brought to justice. He denounced attacks by Moroccan police forces on peaceful demonstrators who had called for the Moroccan forces of occupation to leave the Territory and deplored the ambiguous position taken by the Government of Spain which, as the former administering Power, should contribute to a just and final solution of the conflict in Western Sahara and refrain from protecting a regime which was violating fundamental rights.

103. *Mr. Oribe withdrew.*

104. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Perin took a place at the petitioners' table.*

105. **Mr. Perin**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the Italian Senate, said that he had visited

the Tindouf camps in 1993 and knew that the living conditions had greatly deteriorated since then. Many Saharawis had settled in the States around the Sahara desert. Morocco acknowledged the autonomy of the people, housed them and gave them work; it had a long history of peaceful international relations and respect for peoples and cultures.

106. *Mr. Perin withdrew.*

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.